

EOPPO Complaint Process

The equal opportunity (EO) discrimination complaint process provides a means of resolving individual employment problems or class actions relating to issues involving race, gender, age (40 and above), disability, ethnicity, color, or religion. When an issue is first raised, the Center will try to resolve it informally - i.e. without making a determination of discrimination. If the issues raised are not resolved through an informal process, the petitioner may progress to the formal stage, which involves sworn testimony and results in a decision as to merit of the case.

In the informal process, any employee or applicant for employment who believes she or he has been discriminated against should contact an EO counselor with 45 days of the alleged offense. EO counselors are Goddard employees who are trained to resolve issues quickly at the lowest possible organizational level. At the initial interview the counselor will listen to the issues, clarify the basis of the complaint, inform the petitioner of his or her rights, and provide information on the options available for seeking resolution. In most cases an Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) process will be available for the resolution of informal complaints. If an employee elects that option, the complaint will be referred to the Center ADR program manager. For more information about the ADR program see <http://adr.gsfc.nasa.gov>.

The counseling or ADR options do not result in a resolution of the issues raised, the petitioner may file a formal EO complaint. The formal process must be initiated within 15 days of the termination of the informal process. The EO counselor will provide a form and specific information needed to file. The complainant or a representative, who has been designated in writing, can file the complaint with NASA Headquarters. If the complaint is accepted, NASA Headquarters will initiate a full investigation of the issues and eventually issue an Agency decision on the merits of the case.

Contingent (contract) workers may qualify as "Federal employees" within the meaning of the anti-discrimination statutes and must contact an EO counselor within 45 days of alleged discrimination by NASA. Contract workers will qualify as "Federal employees" only if they meet certain criteria that show that NASA exercises control over the means and manner of their performance. Contractor employees should also pursue resolution through their company's complaint process.

The process associated with class action complaints is different from that for individual complaints. If you are considering filing a class action complaint, please contact the Equal Opportunity Programs Office (EOPPO) directly.